

August 2006

This briefing document outlines study designs for two K–12 research projects of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) assigned by the 2006 Washington State Legislature.

## 1. Assessment Options for K–12 Students

Substitute Senate Bill 6618, passed in 2006, directs the Institute to conduct a *“review and statistical analysis of Washington assessment of student learning [WASL] data to increase understanding of the students who did not meet the standard in one or more areas of assessment, identify the characteristics of those students, and identify possible barriers to student success or possible causes of the lack of success.”* Additionally, the legislation requires the Institute to review alternative assessment options that can be used to augment the current student assessment system.

### Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of students who do not meet state standards on the reading, writing, and math WASL?
- What are possible barriers to student success on the WASL?
- How do assessment alternatives compare in terms of cost; cultural appropriateness, reliability, compliance with RCW 28A.655.061(1),<sup>1</sup> implementation challenges, and potential to standardize across school districts?

### Study Methods and Current Status

- Collection and analysis of data from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). *Datasets covering student and school characteristics and assessment results through 2005 have been received and are being analyzed. We anticipate receiving spring 2006 WASL data in September 2006.*
- Semi-structured interviews with and surveys of teachers, principals, and district officials in a purposive sample of 20 high- and low-achieving schools. *Currently under development. Interview results will inform the development of a quantitative survey-based assessment to be administered at a random sample of high schools.*
- Consultation with a broad group of stakeholders from Washington State to identify alternative assessment options. *Over 100 individuals and organizations are participating in the email consultation process. For more information, email Annie Pennucci at [pennuccia@wsipp.wa.gov](mailto:pennuccia@wsipp.wa.gov).*

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<sup>1</sup> The RCW reads, in relevant part: “The objective alternative assessments for each content area shall be comparable in rigor to the skills and knowledge that the student must demonstrate on the Washington assessment of student learning for each content area.”

- Consultation with nationally recognized experts in assessment, including representatives from centers for multicultural education. *Organizations and researchers are being identified and contacted for consultation.*
- Review of the research literature and other states' experiences with K–12 assessment. *Articles are being collected and entered in a bibliographical database.*

## **Timeline**

We plan to release a report on the relationship between WASL performance and high school graduation rates in fall 2006. At least one interim report covering initial data analyses and a minimum of two alternative assessment options will be completed by December 1, 2006. A final report covering all identified alternative assessment options and detailed data analyses will be issued by December 1, 2007.

## **2. Promoting Academic Success Program Evaluation**

The 2006 supplemental operating budget directs the Institute to “*perform a quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of the remedial programs funded as part of the promoting academic success program.*”<sup>2</sup> Promoting Academic Success (PAS) provides funding for extended learning activities for 10th grade students who did not meet state learning standards on the spring 2006 WASL. The statistical analysis will examine the overall effectiveness of PAS and the relative effectiveness of different PAS programs disaggregated by student characteristics such as ethnicity, economic status, and English language learner status.

## **Research Questions**

- What are the characteristics of students who enroll in PAS?
- What are the characteristics of PAS students who subsequently retake the WASL?
- What is the relative effectiveness of PAS programs as measured by students subsequently meeting learning standards in one or more WASL content areas?

## **Study Methods and Current Status**

- Collection and analysis of student and program data from school districts offering PAS programs. *A survey of teachers providing PAS instruction has been developed and was implemented in July 2006. The data will be statistically analyzed after data collection is completed.*

## **Timeline**

An interim report is due to the Legislature by December 15, 2006, which we anticipate will describe the implementation of summer 2006 PAS programs. A final report is due December 15, 2007.

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<sup>2</sup> Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6386 Section 607 (11).